



Bernard C. "Jack" Young  
Mayor

## COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer  
Director

November 10, 2020

**REQUEST:** Concept Review - Construct four-story apartment building at rear of property

**ADDRESS:** 814 Park Avenue (Mount Vernon Historic District)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Disapproval

**STAFF:** Caitlin Audette

**APPLICANT:** Mirza Baig (owner), Neal Curtis, Carballo Architecture (architect)

### SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Mount Vernon Historic District: The Mount Vernon Historic District encompasses roughly 40 blocks surrounding Mount Vernon Place. The contributing buildings within the district include a diversity of styles and building types including mansions, apartments, offices, and religious structures. The period of significance for the Mount Vernon Historic District extends from 1810 to 1945.

#### Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

The property at 814 Park Avenue includes two separate buildings, the circa 1890 rowhouse and the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century garage at the rear of the property along Tyson Street. The garage is slated for demolition to allow for the construction of this project. The historic rowhouse is a four-story masonry building where the fourth floor is a mansard roof with two decorative arched dormers. The building is currently an apartment building.

### BACKGROUND

- October 13, 2020 - Commission determined at a Demolition 1 Hearing (on the consent agenda) that the rear garage did not contribute to the historic district.
- In 2019 the Commission approved a two-story rear garage at 812 Park Avenue, directly adjacent to this proposal.

### PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant proposes to construct a four-story apartment building at the rear of the property (along Tyson Street) where the non-contributing garage is currently located. The building will have a masonry façade facing Tyson Street with a double-wide garage door and adjacent pedestrian door at the first floor. The upper two floors will be set back from the Tyson Street elevation creating a balcony for the third floor. The southern edge of the rear of the property

will be set back from the property line to allow for windows and an exterior stair providing access to the units.

Staff applied *Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*.

## **2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design**

- Avoid demolishing historic buildings, structures, and landscapes when designing new construction projects.
- Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area.
- Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.
- Radically contrasting building designs are discouraged within local historic districts.
- New buildings that are similar to existing buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.

### Application of Guidelines

The existing garage has been approved for demolition by the commission at the October CHAP hearing. Around this site the building types are so varied with alley houses, carriage houses, modern garages, and historic church buildings. There are no overarching character-defining features among them other than the use of masonry. The simple building proposed uses a masonry façade and simple design features. The proposal is a modern interpretation of a simple rear secondary structure.

## **2.2 Site Design**

- Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.
- Locate and orient secondary structures, such as garages, sheds, or rear buildings, in a similar manner as existing secondary structures.

### Application of Guidelines

The proposal maintains the established setback and site patterns found along Tyson Street and the building retained the location and orientation of secondary structures in the vicinity.

## **2.3 Scale and Form**

- The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.
- New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings.) Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.

- Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.
- Floor-to-floor heights in new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings.
- Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

#### Application of Guidelines

The proposed four-story building is within the range of heights found in the vicinity which includes one-story carriage houses and garages, two- and three-story alley houses and large three- and four-story buildings fronting Park Avenue and Madison Street. However, it would be a substantial addition to the scale of buildings fronting Tyson Street which do not exceed three-stories. The building would use punched openings similar to those in the surrounding buildings. The proposed new construction has a flat roof which is different than other taller buildings in the area but is a contemporary take on the design.

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS**

The Mount Vernon Architectural Review Committee and a group of concerned neighbors were notified about this proposal; no response has been received from the neighborhood to date.

#### **ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION**

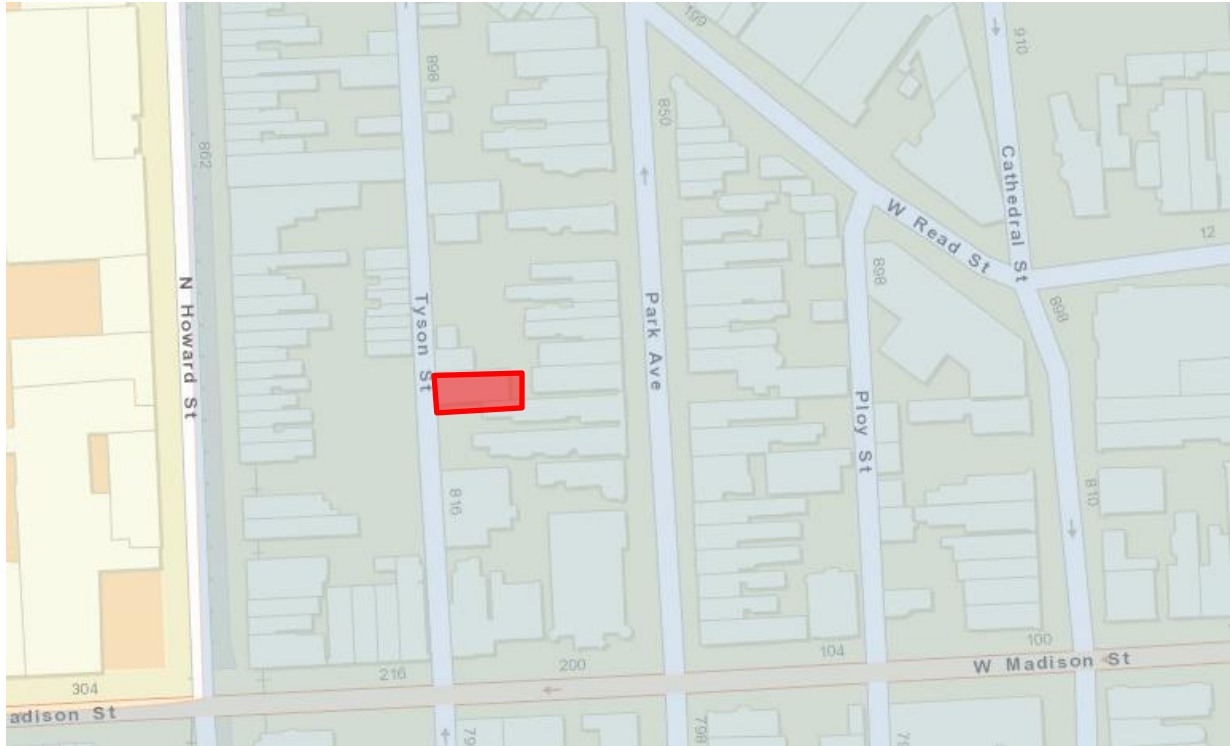
Staff finds that the proposed new construction at the rear of 814 Park Avenue essentially meets the CHAP design guidelines in terms of design principles and site design, but it is striving to put too much of a building fronting on a small scale alley street. It doesn't meet the guidelines for scale along Tyson Street.

**Staff recommends disapproval for height and scale and that the applicant return with a design of three stories.**

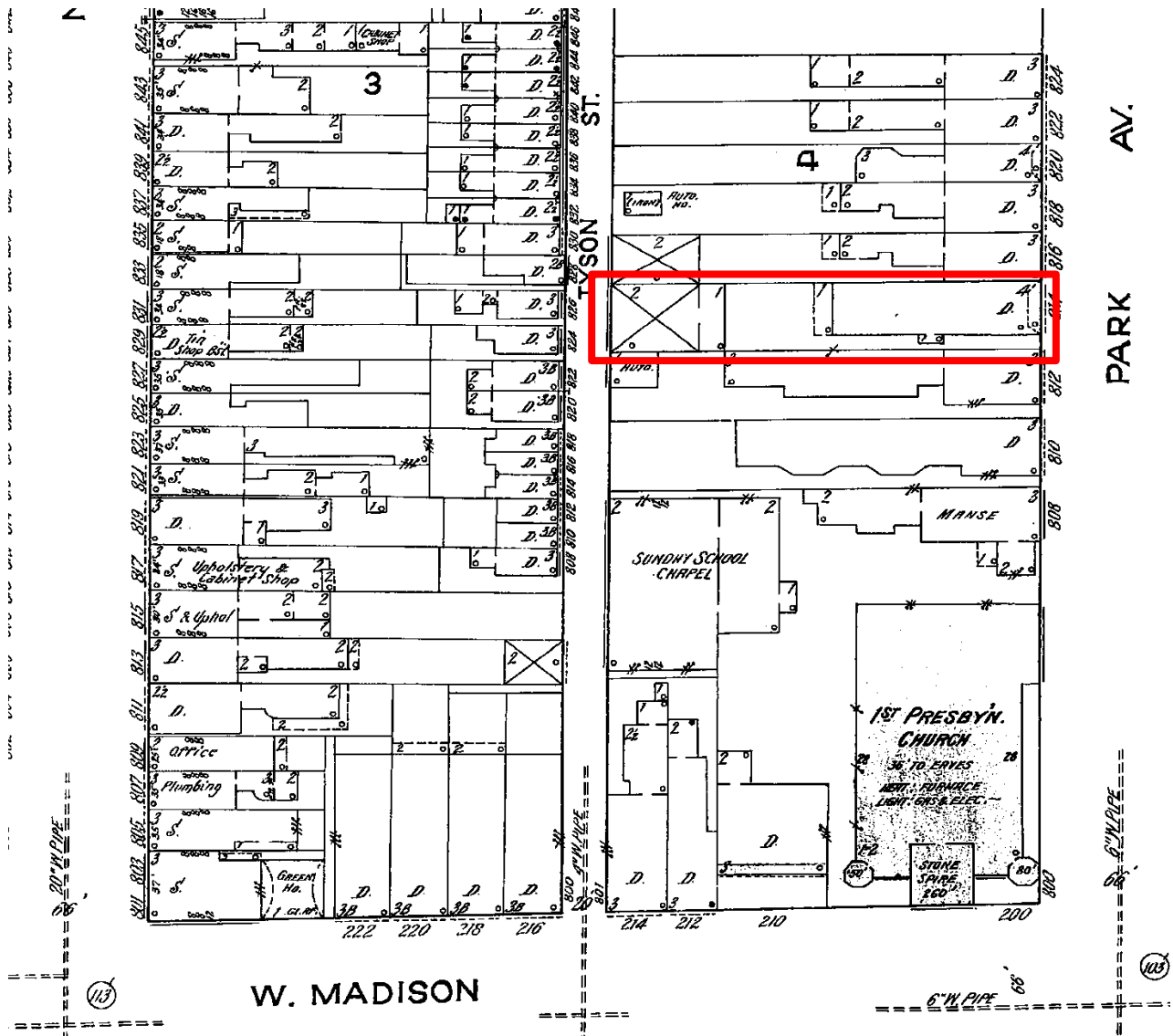


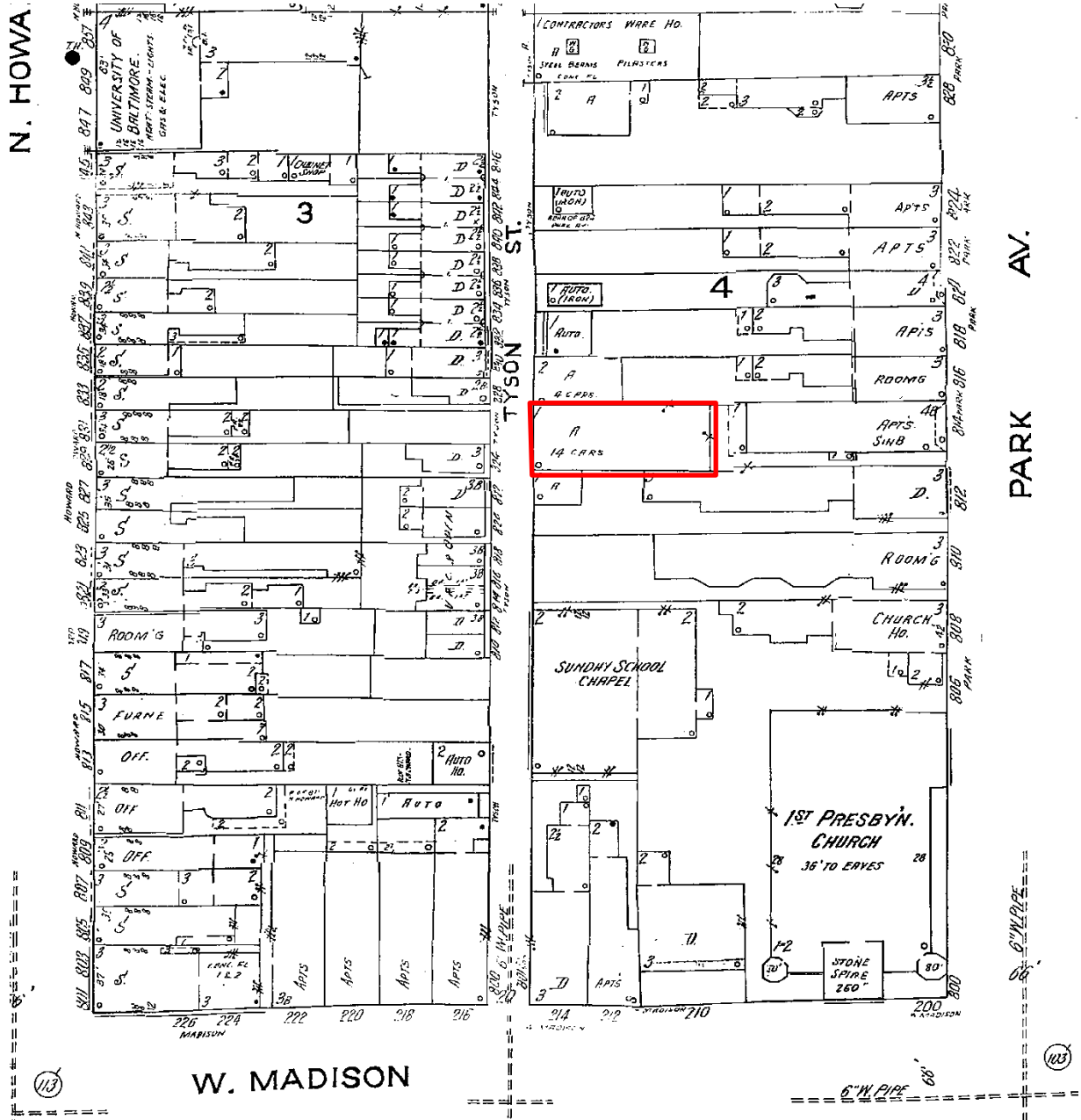
**Eric Holcomb**  
**Director**

## MAP AND IMAGES



*Map 1:* Location of Site (red) in Mount Vernon Historic District (blue)





Map 3: 1953 Sanborn Map; the rear garage at 814 Park Avenue is outlined in red.



*Image 1:* May 2020 view of property (image provided by neighboring property owner)





*Image 2: October 2020 photo of rear garage.*